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TORONTO'S FIRST GERM

(FORT TORONTO)

SOME EXPLANATORY NOTES IN RELATION THERETO,

BY

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HENRY SCADDING, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "TORONTO OF OLD."

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TORONTO'S FIRST GERM.

THERE is, in the heart of Switzerland, a famous lake, always visited by tourists, known as the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons. It is remarkable, not only for its great beauty and the sublime magnificence of its mountainous surroundings, but also for being the centre, so to speak, from which the Switzerland of to-day has been developed. Within view of its waters is Schwyz, the primitive settlement from which the whole country has taken its name; and the four cantons which were the first to enter into a confederacy against the feudal claims of Albert of Hapsburg, line its shores. Now it seems to me that our Lake Simcoe possesses for Canadians—for Canadians of Ontario, at all events—an interest somewhat similar to that which invests the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons, in Switzerland; while for the inhabitants of Toronto, in particular, so far as the name and initial germ of their city are concerned, it is, as it were, the very "hole of the pit whence they were digged." Our Lake Simcoe is not, of course, for one moment to be compared with the Swiss lake in point of natural scenery; but it is curiously connected with the first beginnings of Canadian history: it even happens to have been in its day a "Lake of Four Cantons," having been anciently encircled, and, in a sense, possessed, by the Hurons or Wyandots, a remarkable people, that consisted of four confederated nations or cantons, as the French expressed it. These associated "savages" appear to have adopted the habits of a sedentary people to a degree beyond what was usual with the northern aborigines generally. Populous villages were to be met with everywhere throughout their domain, rudely fortified in some instances, and surrounded by fields of maize. "The people of the Huron

language," writes Charlevoix (*Historical Journal of Travel in North America*, i. 166), "have always applied themselves more than others to cultivating the land. They have also extended themselves much less. Hence, first, they are better settled, better lodged, and better fortified; and there has always been among them more policy and a more distinguished form of government; and, second, their country was more peopled, though they never allowed polygamy." Old clearings, traces of cultivation, fragments of earthenware, stone hatchets, chisels, pipes, arrow-heads, frequently exhumed to this day, and especially the numerous extensive ossuaries, or burying-places, all attest the quondam populousness of the Huron country round Lake Simcoe, and the comparative civilization of its occupants at some period in the past. Neighbouring tribes, west, east, and north, were allies of the Huron confederacy, and acted on occasion with it. (One allied nation in the vicinity cultivated and traded in tobacco, and hence was known as the Tobacco Tribe—*gens de petun*); and in what is now the township of Sunnidale, near the Nottawasaga River, there are the tangible remains of an extensive Huron earthenware manufactory.

The enemies dreaded by the Hurons were the Iroquois, five confederated nations known among the French by that name, and chiefly occupying at the time what is now the State of New York. "They come like foxes, they attack like lions, and fly away like birds:" so it was commonly said of the Iroquois, Charlevoix reports (*ut supra*, i. 170). These were the plague of the Hurons. Ever and anon they made their raid, plundering and burning villages; slaughtering the inhabitants; robbing the traders, *en route* to Montreal by the Ottawa waters, of their packs of furs. In the year 1648-9, they succeeded in reducing the region round Lake Simcoe to the condition of a desert; and from the blow then inflicted, the country, as an Indian country, never recovered.

So early as 1615 twenty-two soldiers were sent up by Champlain from Quebec, for the protection of French interests, and to give confidence to the friendly Hurons. At the same time a mission began to be organized in this locality; first, by the Recollets, or reformed Franciscans; and, then, by the Jesuits;

and here some of the members of the latter society underwent dreadful sufferings and, in several instances, a most cruel death, in their heroic effort to Christianize, in their peculiar way, the native population. After shifting its head-quarters from place to place on the mainland, and thence at length to the neighbouring island of St. Joseph—known to the passing tourist now as Christian Island—the mission was withdrawn in 1650; and some hundreds of the converts followed their spiritual instructors to the vicinity of Quebec, where their descendants still inhabit the villages of Lorette. With profound regret the missionaries abandoned a country which they rightly regarded as the key to a vast heathendom beyond. The residue of the confederacy dispersed far and wide. "We have seen with astonishment," exclaims Charlevoix (i. 170), "one of the most numerous nations and the most warlike of the continent, and the most esteemed of all for their wisdom and understanding, disappear almost entirely in a few years."

The early history of the region which surrounds Lake Simcoe is thus, we see, associated with the annals of the city of Quebec and its environs. The villages of Old and New Lorette still tell of the Hurons of these parts. But the Lake Simcoe region is much more intimately connected with the history of the city of Toronto. The name "Toronto" did not spring from any matter or thing appertaining to the locality on which the city of Toronto now stands. That name is wholly due to the circumstances of the Lake Simcoe region at the time of the existence of the Franciscan or Jesuit Mission in that quarter. If we look at a map of Canada and observe the triangular area shut in by the waters of the Ottawa, Lake Nipissing, and French River on the east and north; by the waters of the St. Lawrence and Lakes Ontario and Erie on the south; and by the waters of Lakes St. Clair and Huron and Georgian Bay on the west,—we shall see that Lake Simcoe occupies the position of a centre or focus within it. In accordance with this physical fact we find Lake Simcoe had become, in the year 1615, a marked rallying-point, a grand rendezvous, a distinguished "place of meeting" for the Huron tribes and their allies; and hence arose the expression which came at length to be applied to it geographically, namely,

TORONTO—a word explained by Gabriel Sagard, the Franciscan, in his *Dictionary of the Huron Tongue* (Paris, 1632), to mean, in French, *Beaucoup*, much or plenty. Under the form *Toronton* it is applied by him to persons as well as things: as in the phrase, "He has killed a number of S." (say Sonnantouans or Senecas), *Toronton S. ahouyo*. So that, taken as an appellation of the Lake Simcoe region, it probably denoted in French, *Lieu ou il y a beaucoup de gens*—a place where there is a numerous population. (In another connection Sagard gives the word as *O-toronton*. In Lahontan's *Quelques Mols Hurons* (see his *Nouveaux Voyages*, ii. 220), it is *A-toronton*).

Other waters besides those of Lake Simcoe sometimes had the term "Toronto" applied to them. Thus in some old maps the lakes leading to the River Trent and Bay of Quinté, are called the Toronto Lakes, doubtless because one of the highways to the Toronto region from the south-east lay through them. Sometimes the River Humber was spoken of as the Toronto River, its valley and that of the Holland River containing a well-beaten trail to the great Huron rendezvous. The intricate, island-studded inlet of the Georgian Bay, at the mouth of the Severn River, now known as Gloucester and Matchedash Bay, was styled the "Bay of Toronto," its waters penetrating far into the Toronto region. This extensive estuary of Lake Huron, drawn, however, with only an approximation to its real shape, figures conspicuously as "The Bay of Toronto" on Herman Moll's map of 1720, a copy of which I possess—a map constructed from authorities of a much earlier date. Lahontan, in 1692, says, "It was called the Bay of Toronto because it received a river which ran out of a small lake of the same name" (*Nouveaux Voyages*, ii. 19); so that if we chose to press the point, it might be maintained that Lake Couchiching is Lake Toronto proper. But our present distinction between Lake Couchiching and Lake Simcoe is not observed in the old maps, and the whole of Lake Simcoe is, in them, unmistakeably "Lake Toronto." I will not now enter at any length upon the subject of the slight variations in the form of the word "Toronto," observable in some old documents and maps. It might easily be shown that the substitution of an *a* for an *e* for the *o*, arose sometimes from a defective ear in the

reporter, and sometimes from his illiteracy; and in the maps, from a misreading of the engraver. Happily, in the now firmly-established and familiar household word TORONTO, we have secured for ever the exact literal form of the term which was most current with the highest French authorities during the French regime, and must be regarded as its true normal form, so far as such a thing can be said of any aboriginal and anciently unwritten term. In some maps Lake Simcoe appears as *Ouendaronk*, probably the same term as Toronto, with a nasal prefix common in Indian words, but which in other names besides Toronto disappeared in the lapse of time; as in Niagara for Onyakara, Choueguen for Ochoueguen (Oswego), Alaska for Onalaska. It is to be remarked, too, that in *Ouentaronk*, the nasal sound of the final syllable of Toronto, or rather Toronton, is represented. In the small map prefixed by Parkman to his *Jesuits in America*, the word is *Wentaron*, that is, Ouentaron. And in La Creux's map, 1660, reproduced in Bressani's *Abridgment of the Relations*, wherein the names are given in Latin, Lake Simcoe appears as *Lacus Ouentaronius*, still plainly the same name in Latinized form.

It will thus be seen that there can be little doubt that "Place of Meeting," place of concourse, place where unusual numbers congregate, is the true interpretation of "Toronto." It is, as we gather from Sagard's dictionary, a Huron or Wyandot expression, not an Iroquois word. It originated in the Huron country, the Lake Simcoe region, and not in the locality where the City of Toronto stands. So that "Trees rising out of the water," or "Log floating on the water," as conjectured by Mohawk or Seneca etymologists (see Lewis H. Morgan, *League of the Iroquois*, p. 74, and Lossing's *Field Book of the War of 1812*, p. 587), from resemblance in sound to an Iroquois word having some such meaning, is illusory.

It was by a popular misuse of terms that the word Toronto came to be applied to the small trading-post or "fort," established in 1749, on the north shore of Lake Ontario, not far from the mouth of the Humber. The proper and official name of this erection was Fort Rouillé, so called in compliment to Antoine Louis Rouillé, the Colonial minister of the day. But traders and

coureurs du bois preferred to speak of Fort Rouillé as Fort Toronto, because it stood at the landing-place of the southern terminus of the trail which conducted up to the well-known "Toronto," the place of concourse, the great Huron rendezvous sixty miles to the north; and the popular phraseology ultimately prevailed. In 1752, in a despatch to Rouillé himself, still Colonial minister, given at length in "Documents relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York," x. 246, published at Albany in 1858, the Baron de Longueuil, successor to La Jonquiere in the governor-generalship, refers to the post under both names; first as Fort Rouillé, and then, falling into the customary way of speaking, as "Toronto."

The establishment of this new depot of trade with the Indians was due to the policy recommended by the enlightened Count de la Galissoniere, who was appointed *ad interim* Governor of New France during the absence of the Marquis de la Jonquiere, taken prisoner by the English, *i.e.*, 1747-49. (To obtain a lively idea of Galissoniere and his times, let the reader peruse with attention Mr. Kirby's carefully-worked-out historical tale, entitled, *Le Chien d'Or*.)

Materials for the erection of Fort Toronto had already been collected during Galissoniere's brief reign; and La Jonquiere, on his liberation and assumption of the Government in 1749, was authorized to complete the work begun, and to furnish the post with goods suited for traffic with the Indians, who were thereby to be induced not to take their furs to the British trading of Choueguen, *i.e.*, Oswego. (See Documents, etc., as above, x. 246.) Some pieces of cloth, which had been recently sent out from France as a sample of the goods to be offered to the Indians, were instantly condemned at Quebec, and ordered to be sent back. "The article is frightful," Governor La Jonquiere and the Intendant Bigot both declare; "the red cloth is brown," they say, "and unpressed, and the blue is a very inferior quality to that of England, and, as long as such ventures are sent, they will not become favourites with the Indians." (x. 200.) At p. 202 it appears that a fear had been expressed by M. Bigot that the opening of the new trading-post at Toronto would injure the trade at Forts Niagara and Frontenac. But then, it is added, if

there be less trade at these two last-mentioned posts, there will be less transportation of merchandize, so that what will be lost on the one side will be gained on the other, and it will amount to nearly the same in the end. Bigot also had proposed "to oblige those who will farm (*exploiter*) Toronto, to sell their goods at a reasonable price."

Garneau, in his *History of Canada*, ii. 116 (Andrew Bell's translation), says that the fort built at Toronto was of stone; but this was certainly not the case, as is proved by the remains of the structure itself, and also by the language of the official "Abstract of Despatches," kept at Paris or Versailles (see Documents as above), which speaks only of the transport of *timber* to the spot. Fort Toronto was nothing more than a stockaded storehouse, with quarters for a keeper and a few soldiers, after the fashion of a small Hudson's Bay trading-post. A large portion of the site which, fifty years ago, used commonly to be visited as that of the "Old French Fort," is now fallen into the lake; but depressions, marking the situation of cellars and portions of some ancient foundations connected with out-buildings are still discernible, as also indications of the line of the stockade on the north side. Formerly there were conspicuous remains of flagged flooring and the basement of chimneys. The cleared space in which the fort stood is marked in an old plan in the Crown Lands Office, and shown also (without being designated in terms) on Sandford Fleming's Topographical Plan of Toronto, 1851. It extended westward a little beyond the present Dufferin Avenue. This cleared space is to be seen also plainly marked on the plan illustrating "the battle of York," April 27, 1813, given by Auchinleck in his *History of the War of 1812-13-14*, p. 146, and also in that given, p. 590, in Lossing's *Field Book of the War of 1812*. The sketch of the remains of the Old French Fort, engraved in the latter work, p. 593, is based on a wrong supposition: the artist evidently mistook some of the "butts," put up of late years for rifle practice, as relics of the fort. The spot, however, on which the sketcher represents himself as sitting, is really a portion of the site of which he was in quest.

It was the intention of General Dearborn, the United States commander of the expedition against York (Toronto) in 1813, to

land his forces at the clearing round the Old French Fort, but "an easterly wind, blowing with violence, drove the small boats in which the troops left the fleet full half a mile farther westward, and beyond an effectual covering by the guns of the navy."

The site of the trading establishment which was thus, as we have seen, destined to be the initial germ of the present city of Toronto, is now enclosed within the bounds of the park appertaining to the Exhibition Buildings of the city. The spot where the post stood is exactly in the south-west angle of the enclosure, overlooking the lake; and here a cairn or mound, commemorative of the fact, has been erected by the Corporation (1878). On its top rests a massive granite boulder, bearing the following inscription: "This cairn marks the exact site of Fort Rouillé, commonly known as Fort Toronto, an Indian Trading-post and Stockade, established A.D. 1749 by order of the Government of Louis XV., in accordance with the recommendations of the Count de la Galissoniere, Administrator of New France, 1747-1749. Erected by the Corporation of the City of Toronto, A.D. 1878."

The boulder which bears the inscription has been allowed to retain its natural features. It was dredged up out of the navigable channel which leads into the adjoining harbour.

It may be subjoined as a rather curious circumstance that, while descendants of the ancient allies of the French, the Hurons of our classic Lake Simcoe region, are still to be seen in the Province of Quebec, namely, at the village of Old and New Lorette, in the neighbourhood of the city of Quebec,—descendants equally, if not more numerous, of their sworn foes, the Iroquois, —the allies, on the whole, of England, are to be seen in our own Province of Ontario, namely, on the Grand River, in the neighbourhood of Brantford.

It should be added, too, perhaps, that among the legends collected by Schoolcraft in his "American Indians," Rochester, 1851, there is one, p. 130, entitled Aingodon and Naywadaha, in which the scene of the story is Toronto, meaning, thereby, the Toronto region of Lake Simcoe. A kind of aboriginal Joan of Arc figures in it, who has strange visions, and is the means of accomplishing for her tribe and its associates a great deliverance.

Finally, the present opportunity should not be missed of clearing

* When hereafter the "Laid" Grounds shall have been built over, purchase the stone which will remain like the "London Stone" in London — & be given

up one more mystery connected with the employment of the term "Toronto." It has been discovered from certain title deeds of property in Port Hope that that place, at the outset of its history, bore for awhile the name of "Toronto." This, without doubt, arose from a suggestion on the part of Mr. Charles Fothergill, a resident in that quarter at the time. Mr. Fothergill was a man of taste, and desired the revival and perpetuation of a beautiful appellation; and so he contrived to have it attached to the newly-projected village. It had already been affixed to a township and "gore" in the Home District, and its inappropriateness as the name of a village in the township of Hope must soon have become apparent. It is curious to observe that, before Mr. Fothergill's day, confusion had occurred between the sites of Port Hope and Toronto. Some have asserted that to the locality on which Toronto now stands the name of Teiaiaagon or Teyaogen was once applied, whilst others have maintained that Teiaiaagon or Teyaogen denoted the site of the present Port Hope. In Documents, etc., as above, ix. 218, we have the following note by the editor: "In Coronelli's map of 1688, this Indian village, Teiaiaagon, is laid down about the present site of Port Hope, Canada West; but on Charlevoix and later maps it occupies what is now Toronto. Possibly they moved," the writer adds, "from the former to the latter point."

The truth, however, appears to be that Teiaiaagon or Teyaogen was a term applied, in Iroquois dialects, to any place where *voyageurs* had to leave their canoes and undertake a tramp overland to some distance. So that the landing-place near the mouth of the Humber, and that near the mouth of Smith's Creek (the river at Port Hope), would each of them be a Teiaiaagon or Teyaogen; the former for traders or Indian bands going to the Toronto region round Lake Simcoe, and the latter for parties on their way to Rice Lake and the back lakes generally. In "Documents," etc., as above, vii. 110, we are informed that Teyaogen, in Iroquois, is "an interval, or anything in the middle of or between two other things. Hence Teihohogen, the Forks of a river."

The first Gazetteer of Upper Canada, 1799, unhesitatingly says: "Teyaogen, on the north side of Lake Ontario, lies about

you as a relic of a far Past. May no Jack Cade! etc

half-way between York (Toronto) and the head of the Bay of Quinte." This would indicate the site of the present Port Hope. It is to be observed that the maps of all the parts of this continent were, of course, in the first instance very rudely and inartistically drawn. The contour of lakes, the course and length of rivers, the sites and relative positions of places, were jotted down, under every disadvantage, by transient explorers of limited experience and views, and from the mere verbal reports of canoe-men and Indians. Hence misconceptions and confusions, of the kind alluded to, were quite likely to occur.



APPENDIX.

By way of Appendix I give the full text of several passages relating to the original Toronto, from which, in the preceding paper, brief extracts were taken.

I.

Documents relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York, (Paris Documents) x. 201. "From Abstract of Despatches from Canada," [kept at Paris or Versailles.] (Date of Abstract, 30th April, 1749.)

"Fort built at Toronto. On being informed that the northern Indians ordinarily went to Choueguen with their peltries, by way of Toronto [*i.e.* by the trail leading up the valley of the Humber], on the north-west side of Lake Ontario, twenty-five leagues from Niagara, [*i.e.* going round the head of the lake] and seventy-five from Fort Frontenac, they [*i.e.* the Governor and intendant at Quebec] thought it advisable to establish a post at that place, and to send thither an officer, fifteen soldiers, and some workmen, to construct a small stockaded fort there. Its expense will not be great; the timber is transported there, and the remainder will be conveyed by the barks belonging to Fort Frontenac.

Too much care cannot be taken to prevent these Indians continuing their trade with the English, and to furnish them, at this post, with all their necessities, even as cheap as at Choueguen. Messrs. de la Jonquiere and Bigot will permit some canoes to go there on licence, and will apply the funds as a gratuity to the officer in command there. But it will be necessary to order the commandants at Detroit, Niagara, and Fort Frontenac to be careful that the traders and storekeepers of these posts furnish goods for two or three years to come at the same rate as the English. By these means the Indians will disaccustom themselves from going to Choueguen, and the English will be obliged to abandon that place. 1st October, 1749 [date of receipt of despatch]. M. Bigot writes, individually, that the establishment of this post is indispensable to stop the Indians on their way to Choueguen; but, besides its being an additional source of expense, it will injure the trade of Niagara and Frontenac. 'Tis true if there be less trade at these two last-mentioned posts, there will be less transportation of merchandise; what will be lost on one side will be gained on the other, and 'twill amount to nearly the same in the end. The King will even reap a great advantage if we can accomplish the fall of Choueguen, by disgusting the Indians with that place; and this can be effected only by selling cheap to them. M. Bigot will attend to this. He proposes to oblige those who will farm (*exploiter*) Toronto to sell their goods at a reasonable price. (31st October, 1749.) M. de la Jonquiere, on his part, observes that it would be desirable that we could become masters of Choueguen." [The reasons for this then follow at length.]

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II.

Page 246. From despatch of M. de Longueuil (successor to de la Jonquiere) to M. de Rouillé (Colonial minister), dated 21st April, 1752 :

"M. de Celoron had addressed these despatches [certain reports from the Ohio region] to M. de la Lavaltrie, the commandant at Niagara, who detached a soldier to convey them to Fort Rouillé (*i.e.*, Fort Toronto), with orders to the storekeeper of that post to transmit them promptly to Montreal. It is not known what became of that soldier. About the same time a Mississagué from Toronto arrived at Niagara, who informed M. de Lavaltrie that he had not seen that soldier at the fort,—not met him on the way. 'Tis to be feared that he had been killed by the Indians, and the despatches carried to the English. M. de Lavaltrie has not failed to recommend to this Indian to make every search on his way back to his village, and to assure him that should he find that soldier, and convey the despatches entrusted to him to the storekeeper of Toronto, he should be well rewarded. [In the summary at the close of this long despatch, Toronto is again named.] You are fully informed, my lord, [Longueuil says] by the detail that I have just had the honour to submit to you : 1st. That the expedition which M. de Celoron was ordered to get up did not take place. 2nd. That the promises the Indians had made to the late M. de la Jonquiere were feigned, and that they are more in favour of our rebels than of us. 3rd. That the attack of the Nipissings has only rendered our rebels more dangerous. 4th. That the Miamis have scalped two soldiers. 5th. That the Pianguichias have killed seven Frenchmen and two slaves. 6th. That the same nation had, shortly before, killed another Frenchman and two slaves. 7th. That, according to what has been stated to M. de Joncaire, the Flatheads have scalped three Frenchmen and taken a fourth, whom they delivered to the English with said scalps. 8th. That we are menaced with a general conspiracy. 9th. That we must fear even for Toronto. 10th. That the English are the indirect authors of the murder of the French. 11th. The famine at Detroit and its dependencies is *quasi* certain. 12th. That smallpox is ravaging the whole of that continent."

III.

The mis-spelt form "Taranto" occurs in the deposition of one Stephen Coffen, a New Englander, and evidently an illiterate man, p. 835, vi., who accompanied an expedition to the Ohio; he was a prisoner among the French, and was equipped as a soldier, and volunteered to go with a detachment of 300 men to Montreal, under the command of Mons. Babeer (he says), "who set off immediately with said command, by land and ice, for Lake Erie" (it was in Sept., 1752). "They, on their way, stopped a couple of days to refresh themselves at Cataraqui Fort; also at Taranto, on the north side of Lake Ontario; then at Niagara Fort, sixteen days; from thence set off by water, being April, and arrived at Chadakoin (Chautauque Co., Portland), on Lake Erie."

IV.

Page 1000. Despatch for Sir Wm. Johnson to the Earl of Shelburne. December 3rd, 1767 :

"The Indians have no business to follow when at peace but hunting; between

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each hunt they have a recess of several months ; they are naturally very covetous, and become daily better acquainted with the value of our goods and their own peltry ; they are everywhere at home, and travel without the expense or inconvenience attending our journeys to them. On the other hand, every step our traders take beyond the Posts is attended at least with some risk and very heavy expense ; which the Indians must feel as heavily on the purchase of their commodities ; all which considered, is it not reasonable to suppose that they would rather employ their idle time in quest of a cheap market, than sit down with such slender returns as they must receive in their own villages. As a proof of which I will give one instance concerning Toronto, on the north shore of Lake Ontario, formerly dependent on Niagara, which, notwithstanding the assertion of Major Rogers "that even a single trader would not think it worth attention to supply a dependent post," yet I have heard traders of long experience and good circumstances affirm that, for the exclusive trade of that place for one season, they would willingly pay £1,000, so certain were they of a quiet market from the cheapness at which they could afford their goods there."



*Expells phrenetically, as he courage & spiritually promoted the
which is just as we hear of courage promoted after war.*

*In better name for land acquisition, Toronto will be seen as well, to
the day.*